



# National Child Care Information Center

*A service of the Child Care Bureau*

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## QUALITY RATING SYSTEMS: QUESTIONS to ASK

Quality Rating Systems (QRS) are a method to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings. QRS are systemic, addressing multiple aspects of early care and education through a uniform approach that is available throughout a State. QRS are part of a State's broader quality improvement continuum and have the following five common elements: 1) standards; 2) accountability; 3) program and practitioner outreach and support; 4) financing incentives specifically linked to compliance with quality standards; and 5) parent education. The following is a sample of suggested discussion questions that can be used as a State is considering the options and issues in the development (or expansion) of a Quality Rating System.

1. Are the goals for implementing the Quality Rating System clearly identified?
2. Are all the potential stakeholders (i.e., early childhood workforce, licensing staff) at the table for the development and ownership of the system?
3. Are the demographics of the early care and education profession known?
4. Is there a strong licensing program in place?
5. Are the financial incentives and supports sufficient to encourage programs to participate in the QRS?
6. If tiered reimbursement is used as a financing incentive, can early care and education programs be paid the higher reimbursement rate without impacting the rates of private-pay parents?
7. Are the differences in the tiers too great? (Are the steps too big?)
8. If accreditation is included in the Quality Rating System, how will it be included? If yes, which accrediting programs will be honored and how will that determination be made?
9. Is there an infrastructure in place to facilitate and support the Quality Rating System?
10. Are the compliance standards for maintaining a quality level (or tier) clearly identified? How will compliance be monitored?
11. Are expectations for participation realistic?
12. Have legal implications been considered as they relate to Quality Rating Systems?
13. How will the system be evaluated?

*The National Child Care Information Center does not endorse any organization, publication, or resource.*

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